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# THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

June 1996

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## Debbie's Blessing

*Susan Turley-Moore*

I feel  
the power  
of the  
moment  
transform  
us all  
into  
community.

After attending to Joan, who just lost her husband, something drew me to Debbie's room. I entered a large, clean, sunny room and my eyes fell upon her face. Her chin was up as though someone had just jerked her head high, and the silence in between her grasping for breath was startling. Her eyes had that blank look of the dying; she was looking not at this world.

I skidded a chair over, sat down and held her hand. I watched her face. I listened to her breathing. Ellis, the aid, came in so quietly that I forgot he was there and I deeply appreciated his sensitivity. Espie, another aid, came in. Ellis said to her, "I'm just going to wait until she is done visiting." "Oh, yes, okay," Espie replied as she worried over Debbie like a loving, helpless mother. She pointed out her feet to me which, like her hands, were patchy blue. "Oh, what is that from . . . does that mean she is close to death?" I ask. She shakes her head, *yes*. "Take your time, take your time," says Ellis as they both softly leave.

I stand and stroke Debbie's forehead; her skin is warm and beautifully bronze. I sit and hold her hand. I stand again and stroke her forehead. I go to leave and cannot. I sit again realizing how peaceful this moment is and what a gift Debbie is giving me. I can be with her and I need not worry about finding the right words to say—she is dying—no need to talk—plenty of need to listen.

"Dear God," I pray, "let Debbie's transition to your home be beautiful and gentle. Greet her with a joyous community of loved

ones. Let her see herself anew—young and healthy—vibrant and full of life. Bless her, her loved ones and all those who have cared for her. Bless the staff here."

I think about leaving. I don't want to go. I hold her finger tips in mine. I talk to her, "Debbie, it's OK to go now, whenever you are ready, just let it slip quietly, gently, softly." Her breathing is less deep—only a small catch in between long silences. I start to say goodbye and let go of her fingertips. I feel a resistance from her fingers but not in the flesh. I sit back down. OK, Debbie, I will stay until you are gone. I want to stay.

Regina, her nurse comes in. She moves around the bed and stands on the other side. "Oh, Debbie, sweet Debbie, I'm going to move you a little, Debbie, to make you more comfortable." Regina's eyes are full of love and compassion as she changes Debbie's position and straightens out the covers. Debbie's head is turned towards me. Our eyes meet. She is looking elsewhere. Mine, looking into hers. Roza and Espie come in and gather around with Regina and me. Both have eyes full of tears. Both stroke her forehead. Roza bends over to kiss her cheek. They leave together in that helpless, pained slow walk. Regina and I listen to her breathing. Regina looks into my eyes and says, "I think I better get my stethoscope." "Yes, it is time," I whisper. She hesitates. We both hold her hands. Peacefully, quietly, softly, Debbie takes her last breath.

Ellis and Espie come back in. Ellis searches for life. "No, there is nothing here." Ellis and Espie both throw up their arms in hallelujah, tears and smiles break out as they proclaim, "She just wanted company. That's what it was. She didn't want to die alone. Oh, thank God you were here, thank God!" I look up at them astonished and grateful. I cry tears of release, tears of the mourner.

*(Continued on page 83)*

## Moving Toward the Light

Guest Editorial by Rev. Edwin Capon

Many years ago I heard a story which has stuck with me until now. It went something like this. "A man from a great metropolis was visiting a relative in a small rural community. Needing a haircut, he went to a local barbershop where he got into a conversation with an elderly man waiting—like himself—his turn in the barber's chair. With mild curiosity, but more to keep the conversation going, he asked the man, "Do people around here enjoy their religion?" He was somewhat taken aback by the answer. "Them as have it do."

This year's convention theme reminded me of that story. Certainly one who "serves the Lord with gladness" is enjoying his religion, for what better definition of religion can we have than serving the Lord.

I must confess that I am not sure what we had in mind when we selected this theme, part of the second verse of Psalm 100. I suspect we may have had in mind "uses," concrete ways of expressing love and concern for the individual and for our larger neighbors. In the Psalm, however, serve clearly means "worship." In fact, The New English Bible translates the phrase "Worship the Lord in gladness." Apparently Swedenborg also understood it this way, for in *Prophets and Psalms* he writes this of verses 1-3: "Song in praise of the Lord, that he is to be worshipped with the heart, because He is the Former of the church."

There is no doubt that our New Church faith places great emphasis upon a life of charity, a life in which we serve the Lord by serving others. If we do not live such a life, our worship life would not be real. But it is quite clear in our teachings that our worship life is also very important. It may not be unreasonable to say equally important. I justify this assertion by such statements in Swedenborg as this: "... unless there were external worship, man would know nothing of what is holy." And this: "... he who worships the Lord, and gives glory to Him, is in humiliation, and proprium recedes from him who is in humiliation, and in proportion as this recedes, the Divine is received."

As for "gladness," whether we are worshipping the Lord in His sanctuary or serving His will out in the world, there is cause for rejoicing for those who know the Lord. For we know "that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us ... we are His people ..." and "the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations." That is how the Psalmist saw it and how, too, we also can see it.

I can sympathize—even agree—with those who say our church should do more to serve others. But I believe we are more likely to do so when we turn to the Lord more often and more enthusiastically in worship. Consider these other words of Swedenborg: "Worship itself is nothing but a certain activity coming forth from the Celestial that is within. The Celestial cannot exist without activity, and worship is its first activity." "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God." (Psalm 100)

*The Rev. Edwin Capon is president of the denomination, a former parish minister in several cities including San Francisco and St. Paul, and a former president of the Swedenborg School of Religion.*

## The Messenger

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## Important Church Calendar Dates

June 26—30 Convention 1996  
Urbana, Ohio

August 18-21 Cabinet—Fryeburg

August 23-24 PMSU / AFC—Fryeburg

*"Serve the Lord  
With Gladness"*

*Convention '96*

*Urbana, Ohio  
June 26 - 30*

*Debbie's Blessing*  
(Continued from front cover)

His words "Who will cry for me?" pass through my thoughts. I see in my mind's eye the women at Jesus' tomb. I smell the burial spices, see the hands wiping away tears, the scrolls of white linen, the disciples huddled about waiting. I feel the power of the moment transform us all into community. I am astonished by the love bursting forth from within all of us. Espie and Ellis hug my shoulders as I let tears roll down my face onto the metal bar of the bed frame. I am confused. Whose tears are these,

for I did not know her well. They are from her . . . I felt not tears of pain but tears of release. Regina asks me if I am OK. I say, "Yes, I'm just releasing." What a "California thing" to say, but I know she understands.

After everyone left I stayed by her bedside cherishing the moment, receiving the gift, wrapped in the poignancy of it all. I do not know why I was permitted to anoint Debbie, to pray for her, to bless her, to be given the gift to witness her last breath. I know not why Regina and I were present together, sharing Debbie's moment of transition. But I am forever grateful that Debbie allowed

me this honor, this moment shared with friends, this gift of community. This is my church, these are my parishioners, this is my faith. I have been blessed.

*The Rev. Susan Turley-Moore is the pastor of the Living Waters HIV Ministry in San Francisco, California, and chaplain at St. Mary's Medical Center AIDS Dementia Care Unit. At the request of Debbie's family and the medical staff of St. Mary's Care Unit, the foregoing was read at her memorial service and is displayed on the bulletin board in the Care Unit for family and friends to read. As a result, Susan has had many opportunities to talk with people who have responded to it about the Living Waters Ministry and the Swedenborgian Church.*

## PROGRAM OF EVENTS — CONVENTION '96

### Sunday, June 23

- 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. ExCOM
- 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. COM Sharing
- 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. COM Business Session
- Informal Check-in Spouses Group
- 1st Floor lounge (Blackmer)

### Monday, June 24

- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. COM Business Session
- Spouses' Group
- 11:30 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 - 2:45 p.m. COM Business Session
- Spouses' Group
- 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. COM Sexuality Committee
- Spouses' Group
- 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Spouses' Group - Massage Therapist & Direction
- 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. COM Strategic Planning

### Tuesday, June 25

- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 - 10:30 a.m. COM meeting with SSR
- 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. Spouses' Group
- 11:30 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 - 2:45 p.m. COM Business Session
- Spouses' Group
- 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. COM Ethics & Employment
- Spouses' Group
- 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. COM Business Session
- Spouses' Group - joint

### Wednesday, June 26

- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Council of Ministers
- 9:00 a.m. Ministers' Spouses
- 10:00 a.m. General Council
- Spouses' Group
- 11:30 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. Opening of Convention
- 3:00 p.m. Sunday School Association

- 4:00 p.m. General Council
- 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Dinner
- 7:30 p.m. Worship Service
- Business Session
- 9:30 p.m. Reception

### Thursday, June 27

- 7:00 a.m. Chapel Service
- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:00 a.m. Service of Remembrance
- 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. Theme Presentation
- 11:15 a.m. Report of the Nominating Committee
- Nominations from the floor
- 11:30 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 11:30 - 1:30 p.m. Women's Alliance Luncheon
- 1:15 - 2:45 p.m. Business Session
- 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. Mini-courses
- 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Dinner
- 7:30 p.m. SSR Graduation
- SSR Reception

### Friday, June 28

- 7:00 a.m. Chapel Service
- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 - 10:30 a.m. Theme Continuation
- 10:45 a.m. Election of Officers
- 11:30 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:15 p.m. Business Session
- 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. Mini-courses
- 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Business Session
- 8:00 p.m. Service of Healing and Renewal
- 9:15 p.m. Reception

### Saturday, June 29

- 6:45 a.m. Chapel
- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. Corporation of SSR
- 11:30 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:30 - 3:45 p.m. General Council
- 4:00 p.m. Buses leave for picnic supper and performance of "Blue Jacket"

### Sunday, June 30

- 10:00 a.m. Worship Service

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# The Ways of Prayer

Rachel Rivers

The power  
of spirit  
is being  
rediscovered,  
and with it,  
the power of  
prayer.

In the book *Saint Joan*, by George Bernard Shaw, Joan of Arc insists that she hears voices which come from God. She is informed by skeptics that the voices actually come from her imagination. Unmoved, Joan replies, "Yes, that is how God speaks to me."

The art of conversing with God requires open-mindedness and imagination. It is not a difficult art to dabble in, but it is a tough discipline to learn well and to maintain. Among its rewards are peace, confidence, and joy. I want to talk about how God speaks to us, about praying, and about how prayer actually works. Like the skeptics in Joan of Arc's day, it is easy to discount talking with God as insubstantial, as all in the imagination. People often have difficulty accepting the validity of prayer, feeling that it has no basis in the real world.

## Difficulty in Discerning Divine Response

The first problem most of us confront when speaking with God is in discerning what God is saying back to us. There is the error of interpreting God's response too narrowly, not recognizing God's response unless it comes in a lightning bolt.

It is like the man sitting on top of his house as the flood waters rise, praying fervently to God for help. Along comes a person in a boat, offering to row the man to safety, and he says, "No, thank you—God will rescue me from my plight." The water around the house rises higher. Next along comes a helicopter, and a rope is dangled down for the man to grasp. Again the man declines. Finally the waters cover the roof of the house and the man drowns. In heaven he asks God, "I prayed for you to save me—why did you let me drown?" And God replies, "I sent you a boat and a helicopter—what else did you want?"

The answer to a prayer can come in the form of a rescue boat or helicopter, or in the form of a new insight we hadn't seen before. The answer to a prayer can be a sense of peace, or it can come in the form of a discomfort with something that before hadn't bothered us. It can come in the easing of pain, or in the form of a friend who helps us tolerate what we could not bear alone. And the answer to a prayer can come in the form of leaving all of the outer circumstances alone, but in the guiding of us in terms of an inner spiritual life.

Sometimes we recognize a kind of response

to prayer, but we wonder if it isn't really more like coincidence rather than a providential response. It is easy to conclude that it would have worked out this way anyway. Countering such a suggestion, Archbishop William Temple once wryly noted that coincidences occurred much more frequently when he prayed. And that is certainly the testimony of countless people who have sustained long prayer lives.

## Our Difficulty in Understanding the Non-Material

Another strike against prayer is the seemingly rational belief that something so insubstantial cannot possibly have an actual physical effect. The way to get a croquet ball through the wicket is to hit it with a mallet. Sitting on the grass and praying for it to move of its own accord is likely to have little effect. It is interesting that while this is generally true for croquet balls, it is less true in the subtler interiors.

A good analogy lies with the story of the invention of the microscope. After that invention, all sorts of things became visible that were not apparent before. In the early days of surgery, many doctors scoffed at the idea that washing one's hands before operating was necessary, that tiny invisible germs could cause infection if introduced into an open wound, that something you couldn't even see could make a person sick!

But the microscope changed all of that and changed our perception of reality. And the progress didn't end there. In research conducted in the 1970s and 80s it became evident that even more was at work than met the microscopic eye. While spirit and matter have been separated in our thinking for some centuries, they are at last being reunited through the very science that segregated them. It has been somewhat like following a trail of bread crumbs that went deeper and deeper into the forest. In looking at smaller and smaller pieces of reality, something akin to spirit is now being envisioned by some very serious scientists. The power of spirit is being rediscovered, and with it, the power of prayer.

For instead of finding the basic building blocks of reality in material form, as expected, what has been found is energy. And this energy is affected by *focused intentionality*. Focused intentionality is a synonym for prayer. The name that Swedenborg gave, for the energy scientists are now finding as the basis for material reality, is love. Yes—love! Looking at it from

this angle, it makes perfect sense that caring, focused love should have an effect on the subtle energies from which physical reality emerges.

### A Suggestion for How to Pray

There are many ways to pray, but for those looking for some new ways, I would like to suggest one method of prayer. One of the simplest and most effective ways to pray is to go to a quiet place, close your eyes, and imagine that you are on holy ground, in the presence of God. You can imagine God any way you'd like: in the form of a person, in the form of a sunbeam, or a warm and caring glow of light, or just as a sensed felt presence.

Then, simply share with God, in your imagination, what is on your mind and in your heart. This can be done through writing if you find that easier. (The purpose in this is to open the channel of awareness to God for us, and to focus out thoughts and concerns.) Next you quiet yourself again and just be present. Allow yourself to imagine God responding to you, and let yourself be open to whatever way that response might manifest. It could be in a new insight, in a deeper sense of trust, a new focus on an old problem, or in a timely and unexpected phone call from a helpful friend. Keep your mind alert in the hours and days that follow for clues of God's speaking to you.

It is never wrong to bring our common, ordinary and very worldly concerns and anxieties to God. But then, along with that, we must also learn how to give these concerns truly over to God. Simply hand them over, but to do it with real intentionality. And once we have done that, then we trust that we are in the stream of divine providence, and we proceed with our lives as sensitively as we can, trying to be open to hearing God's voice in our lives.

It is impossible for us to ever know how life would have worked out if we had made other decisions and taken other actions than the ones we do make, and so we can never submit reality to a laboratory test and compare the results of our life with prayer to our life *without* prayer. But the testimony of scripture and of countless great religious figures agree with the Archbishop: life does seem to contain a great many more interesting and favorable coincidences when we involve our spiritual selves in a conscious way with prayer.

*The Rev. Dr. Rachel Rivers is a pastoral psychotherapist and co-minister at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.*

*Edited text of a sermon given August 18, 1991, at the San Francisco church.*

## Celebrating Men

it was a joyous occasion trying to be formal  
when his name was called  
he bounded to the front  
to stand beside the other men.  
his impulse was to touch;  
to hug, shake hands,  
pat his comrades on their shoulders.

aah, but restraint.  
this is a public place.  
a ceremony  
touching?

the three men stood together,  
together in community,  
together in love, in pride, in joy.

but separate  
in their own cylinder of space  
hands held firmly  
behind them;  
as if fearful that a stray hand  
might act of its own mind  
and grasp, stroke, jab lightly, or  
reach out to hug  
before the appointed time.

Many of us saw  
his impulse toward touch.  
we shared the desire  
to physically acknowledge  
joy, acceptance, community.

This community of men  
on the cusp between old propriety  
and new freedom  
Celebrate them.

Mourn, briefly,  
their moment of fear  
and that single opportunity lost to old habit.

Celebrate Long.

—Nancy Salmon

*Reprinted from The Swedenborgian Church newsletter, May 1995, Portland, Maine.*

# Giving Up The Garden

Ron Brugler



For me, these recent months have been a time of immense learning and insight—so much so that I've felt as though if I learn anything else, or if I see anything more in a new way, I am going to either scream or cry. It has been that intense. I have encountered something head on that has been a very difficult thing to face. We've all faced such times, times that call us to give up the garden, that state of harmony and peace that we long for our lives to be, even though it seldom is so.

In my case, along with my brothers and sisters, I have confronted a real-life issue that most families either have or will eventually wrestle with in one form or another.

Like it or not, each of us will confront a time when we must give up the garden so that our

spirits can be healed and made whole.

I've learned something about giving up the garden. It is that once the garden of illusion which we try to make in life becomes faded, its gates, like that garden of long ago, are closed and we must carry on. The Bible speaks the truth when it says that guards stand at those gates in order to ensure that we retreat into it no more. In an odd sort of way I am thankful for that—and I have learned that each of us must give up certain gardens if we are to grow, and love, and become what God intends for us to be.

Some weeks ago I stood here and told you that I had intended to talk about heaven, and ended up on a much different topic—the subject of hell. What I didn't reveal at that time was that hell is exactly where I was. The hell that had encroached upon my life stemmed from some-

thing that my brothers and sisters and I had learned, and the more we learned, the stronger and darker it became.

We learned through an odd series of events that my mother is in deep financial trouble, odd because she is retired and has ample resources to draw upon in her golden years. When we first inquired about her finances, she responded that nothing was wrong. We took this as pride, as a reflection of her independent nature. But we soon learned that this was not the case at all.

We took difficult steps to learn the truth by employing both a lawyer and a private investigator, and through their efforts we learned that my mother is a victim of an abuse



*Eve helps us do an incredible thing—we can give up the garden and move out into the life God intends.*

that is far too common in today's world. All of her assets, down to her last penny, and even more obtained through mortgages on her house, have been given to my youngest brother in order to support his addiction to drugs—everything from pot and LSD, to cocaine and a new drug, Zannex (and you parents might as well remember that name—Zannex—it helps the addict to have a "good" trip). In a few months' time, my brother was given thousands of dollars, and needs more. My mother is on the verge of losing her home.

What has been even more difficult for us to understand is the fact that my mother has willingly done this because she loves her son. During a family intervention, we saw that love can do very strange things. It is so powerful that it can close our eyes to reality. It is so loud that it can deafen our ears to pleas for help. It

is such a strong sedative that it can dull our senses to pain and torment. Yes, love can be warped to the point where we choose to live in a contrived garden of innocence where we cling to denial and blindness. Like Adam in our scripture lesson, love can make us unwilling to eat from the tree of knowledge, because it is easier and less painful to avoid the truth. And having looked at that, let me also say that from this experience, I now see our scripture lesson in a new light, a real light, that can help us all.

As my brothers and sisters and I learned of this situation, at first we had no idea what to do. You know enough about me to know that our childhood was like a garden of Eden, and its imperfections have faded because of the predominance of love and goodness that those years held. I thank God that I will always have the memory of that garden

with me. But these past few weeks have forced us to leave that garden behind and face the present reality. Just like Adam and Eve, we have gone forth from that garden, hand in hand, to confront it.

Throughout this process we have been so much like those first humans. We have had new animals brought before us, and have had to name them. We have been given choices, and forced to make them. We have needed new help mates, and have sought them. We have realized our nakedness and longed to run and hide, attempting to make clothes in which to cover ourselves and keep the secret—as they did out of fig leaves. But I've learned something about fig leaves. They itch. They cause a rash. They cannot be endured for long. And then as if God Himself spoke to us in that garden, we have realized something for which I will be forever

grateful—that in our nakedness, we are just like everyone else. We have left the garden and joined the human race.

**W**e realized that although our mother had urged us not to eat the tree of knowledge, although she begged us to not uncover the truth because it was bad, we now know that such uncoverings are a necessary part of life that all of us in this human family must engage in. This awareness enabled us to hear a voice that came to us offering help. I say in all sincerity, that I liken it to the voice of that first woman, whose name was Eve.

I've come to see how this incredible woman is a victim of sorts. Much blame has been placed at her feet, all because she had the courage to risk. Thanks to the early teachings of Augustine, however, she has seldom been viewed in this light. She has instead been made responsible for many bad things—from original sin, to human suffering, to sexual immorality and the inequality of the sexes. Yes, throughout the centuries we Christians have held onto a belief that if it had not been for Eve we would still be in that garden, innocent and unafraid. But I've come to know her in a different light, and I am glad to have met her.

In the creation story, it is the man who longs to remain pure. He represents our need to cling to ignorance. He has no desire to eat of the tree of knowledge. But not Eve. She recognizes that without knowledge life is incomplete. She is not afraid of the fact that if she eats of it, her life will be forever changed. She willingly takes that risk, and in doing so completes the creation of human beings. Yes, thanks to Eve, life will have its painful and difficult times, but it will also have its joyous and productive times. In this way Eve left us with a remarkable legacy of awareness, and the ability not only to know right from wrong, but the ability to act upon this knowledge, even if it means pain for the sake of wholeness.

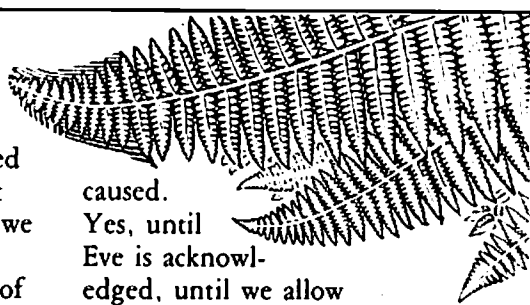
Perhaps this is why I have been drawn to explore the spiritual meaning of this account of our creation.

In doing so I have been reminded of many things. My memory has been refreshed on the two separate stories of creation that are contained within Genesis, stories that present almost reverse descriptions of how we came into being.

In the first there is the creation of light and the cosmos, of earth and land, of plants and animals, and then the last creation, man and woman made simultaneously in God's image. This account of creation was written during the Babylonian Exile when people felt as though God had abandoned them, which explains its focus on God creating every natural and human condition. Present within them all is the fact that goodness can come out of them.

Today's reading, however, was written much earlier when Israel was at the height of its power during the reign of Solomon. Its meaning focuses on knowledge and our use of it. In this story, the first act of creation is the formation of a human being from the soil of the ground. A garden is then created for the human to live in, animals and birds are created to be companions for the human, and finally, a rib is taken from the first human and a second human is created. They are then man and woman, who are not named until they leave the garden. Why? Because the man in his mythological form desires eternal infancy and innocence. Woman longs to grow, confront and challenge. And once she has acted upon this desire, both woman and man's innocence are gone. Then, they learn who they are.

In its spiritual meaning our teachings tell us that Adam represents our external life while Eve portrays our internal thoughts and feelings. This may sound like theological mish-mash, but it is so real. Like Adam, like my mother, so often, we want everything to appear fine and dandy on the outside. We go about our daily lives, wanting everyone to think that there is nothing wrong. But like Eve, like my brothers and sisters and I have had to do, we wrestle with the inner turmoil that the lie has



caused.

Yes, until Eve is acknowledged, until we allow the truth to hurt and deal with it, our lives will never be complete and whole. Eve helps us do an incredible thing—we can give up the garden and move out into the life God intends.

I have shared with you of real life. So does Genesis in the creation story. We are reminded that we are called to evaluate how we are living out our parts in this entity known as the human family, and doing our part is not always easy. It challenges us to give up the gardens of denial and innocence so that Eve may come into being. With her present within us, we can bring the truth out into the light of day.

My hope is that we'll cherish her existence within us, so that we can give up the gardens that hold us back from life, no matter what they may be for us. And doing so, may we go forth from the garden with those we love, and enter into the fullness of life that God offers to us.

## EPILOGUE

During our recent peer supervision meetings I talked about the struggle I had addressed in this article. One of the clergy asked me, "How has God been with you throughout this?"

My response was that God has given my brothers and sisters and I the strength to take whatever steps were necessary, and that with each and every one, there has been unanimous consensus among us on the action to be taken. The steps have been many. None have been easy.

We have drawn upon the wealth of resources that are available to families facing such a difficult situation, including social services, legal, Adult Protective Services, law enforcement and medical. As a result,

*(Continued on page 88)*

## Giving up the Garden

(Continued from page 87)

one of my sisters now has my mother's power of attorney. If necessary, we will pursue conservatorship. My oldest sister and brother have had my mother's house signed over to them and obtained a loan to consolidate her debts. New bank accounts have been opened so that my youngest brother cannot access further funds. We've even utilized resources that our church offers, and will be forever grateful for Betsy Coffman's\* help in teaching us about co-dependency. With each and every step, God has been with us. That is true.

But I've come to realize that there is another way that God has been there for us. You see, as in many families, the older we became, the farther apart we grew. As the years passed, we each immersed ourselves in our own families and lives. In a sense, until this all happened, we hardly knew each other anymore. Our childhood Garden of Eden was a distant memory.

Now that is all changed. God has brought us back together. We've cried. We've laughed. We've shared untold numbers of phone calls to learn how things are progressing and to offer each other support. We have been reminded of how important a family is. And to top it all off, where once we ended our occasional phone calls to each other with the word "goodbye," they now end in a different way—we say, "I love you."

Yes, we gave up a garden, and doing so has not been easy. But we've found a better one! I wonder, who could ask God for anything more?

*The Rev. Ron Brugler is the minister at the Swedenborgian Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario. The foregoing is an edited version of a sermon given February 25, 1996. The epilogue was written later.*

*\*Betsy Coffman is a certified chemical dependency counselor on the denomination's Substance Abuse Committee, a lay leader in training with SSR, and a member of the Swedenborgian Church in Urbana, Ohio.*

## Book Review



Henry Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*. Trans. by Leonard Fox. (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1995).

*Reviewed by Malcolm Peck*

Two essays are presented in this volume that examine primarily works of Persian (Iranian) Shi'a mystics whose views of the natural and spiritual worlds and their relationship to each other are seen as converging significantly with ideas fundamental to Swedenborgian thought.

The first essay, "*Mundus Imaginalis*, or the Imaginary and the Imaginal," identifies points of convergence between the ideas of Swedenborg and those of Sohrevardi and other Persian Islamic mystics. Among these are the concept of a basic dichotomy of spiritual and natural realities and the notion of *mundus imaginalis*, an intermediate realm between the empirical world and that of abstract understanding. Another very Swedenborgian concept mirrored in the writings of Islamic mystics is the view of spiritual bodies as not being in the world but the world as existing in them.

The second, longer, and more interesting essay, "Comparative Spiritual Hermeneutics," comments at some length on several remarkably close resemblances between Swedenborg's interpretations of Biblical scriptures and Quranic interpretations of Islamic mystics, both Ithna'ashari (Twelver) and Isma'ili Shi'as. The Swedenborgian doctrine of correspondences finds its counterpart in the "epiphanic images" of Islamic mysticism. Corbin cites also the

positing of the simultaneous existence of a spiritual sense and literal appearance in the natural world, reflecting a continual "influx" from the spiritual world into the natural world. He sees in the idea that the "potential angelhood" of humans becomes "actual angelhood" after death a "profound accord" between Isma'ili and Swedenborgian hermeneutics. Finally, and most intriguingly, if not controversially, he speaks of "Isma'ili Christology." Here Corbin touches on the fascinating linkage of Judaism and Christianity with Islam.

The linking of Isma'ili ideas and Christian doctrines that focus specifically on the figure of Christ leads Corbin to muse on the notion of the great 18th-19th century German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher that someday there might emerge a "general theology of religions." This surely is beyond reach in today's world, where the image of Shi'a Islam is that of Khomeinism and not the inspired musings of the Shi'a mystics from Islam's classical age. What meeting of minds may exist is limited to those few who may represent the intellectual and spiritual posterity of Swedenborg and the Shi'a mystics whom Corbin identifies. Perhaps in God's good time they will come together as a common "light to lighten the Gentiles," spreading their message beyond its hitherto circumscribed boundaries. Implicit in the author's discourse are questions of wider import. What is the potential influence of mystical thinkers, Swedenborg and others, in the wider world? Is the convergence of mystical Islamic ideas and aspects of Swedenborgian thought only an intellectual curiosity or a confirming sign of some profound meeting of fundamental truths? Could similar unions be found between Swedenborgian ideas and mystical concepts of religious faiths other than Islam? Much of the value of Corbin's book lies in its capacity to stimulate these and other lines of inquiry.

This is not an easy book. A study which features frequent textual interpolations in French, German, Latin, Greek, Farsi, and Arabic will not be



most people's idea of light reading for the beach. It will, however, reward close study by serious Swedenborgians.

A word about the translator is in order. Leonard Fox has drawn upon exceptional linguistic abilities as well as broad and profound erudition in relevant fields of study to produce a clear, readable, even elegant translation from the French.

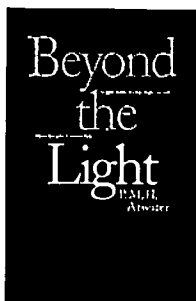
*Dr. Malcolm C. Peck is a member and vice-president of the Washington, D.C. Swedenborgian Church, and is author of United Arab Emirates: A Venture in Unity, Westview Press, 1986; Boulder, CO. He is finishing a second book, A Historical Dictionary of the Gulf Arab States, to be published later this year by Scarecrow Press. Dr. Peck is a program officer with the programming division of Meridian International Center, a non-profit organization that arranges cultural programs and study tours for international visitors in Washington, D.C. He grew up in the Swedenborgian Church and has devoted much of his adult life to studying and working with the Islamic Middle East.*

## SCEC "How-To" Booklet in Process

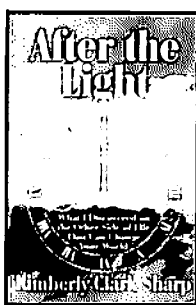
Assisting, encouraging, and suggesting ways individuals and churches can participate in addressing local community needs and at times broader needs is the emerging direction this year for the Social Concerns Education Committee. As part of Convention '96, a program, "Serving the Lord with Gladness in Communities" is being coordinated by the Education Support Unit. This program will encourage individuals and churches to explore ways of making a difference in communities. The SCEC is working on a brochure or practical guide which can assist individuals and churches in finding ways to join with others to address needs in communities. Current members of our committee include: Anna Brown, Nadine Cotton (co-chair), Esther Fyk (co-chair), Louis Partin, Susan Poole, Lorraine Sando (Education Support Unit liaison), Marilyn Turley, Manon Washburn, the Rev. Gladys Wheaton, and the Rev. Dr. Ted Klein (co-chair).

*Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, co-chair  
Social Concerns Education Committee*

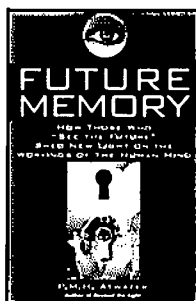
## Book Reviews



*Beyond the Light, What Isn't Being Said About the Near-Death Experience*, by P.M. H. Atwater, LhD. Birch Lane Press, published by Carol Publishing Group. 1994.



*After the Light*, by Kimberly Clark Sharp. Published by William Morrow & Co., Inc., New York. 1995.



*Future Memory*, P.M.H. Atwater, Lh.D. Birch Lane Press, published by Carol Publishing Group. 1996.

*Reviewed by Steve Koke*

These books are listed in order of publication dates, and I'm indebted to Mona Conner of the New York church for recommending the first two to me.

Near-death experiences (NDEs) are not as widely discussed as they used to be, probably because the field is now expanding in a lot of unexpected directions. The many things that

happen *after* the near-death experience are now fascinating researchers. The weird and wonderful are by no means over when a person is healed and takes up his worldly self again.

Your electronic watch may fail or go wild. You may read other people's thoughts. Dramatic coincidences occur, and things may materialize from elsewhere, complete with sense of humor (Kimberly Clark Sharp, after searching fruitlessly on the floor of her car for a much needed box of tissues, suddenly found one that had not been there before, made by Kimberly Clark; she had always bought Kleenex). According to P.M.H. Atwater, who had three near-death experiences, you may also have premonitions, or even actual views, of the future (*Future Memory*). Both writers tell of angels and demons who look real, solid, and show a paradoxical ability to relate intimately to objects in the material world.

It's as if the other world won't let you go—after you have been there, you remain a kind of representative of its special spacetime, carrying it around with you.

Both of these writers are acknowledged researchers with files of thousands of other people's experiences to draw from. Atwater's background is literary; before these two books, she published *The Magical Language of Runes*, *Goddess Runes*, and *Coming Back to Life: The Aftereffects of the Near-Death Experience*. The latter was updated as *Beyond the Light*, the first book of a trilogy on near-death experiences and their often astonishing aftermath. *Future Memory* is the second book of the trilogy; the third will be *A Manual for Developing Humans*.

Sharp co-founded, and was president of, the Seattle branch of IANDS (International Association of Near-Death Studies, originally founded by Kenneth Ring). She was a social worker at Seattle's Harborview Medical Center, one of the best and busiest trauma centers in the country. She was later director of social work at Seattle's Fred (Continued on page 90)

## Book Reviews (cont.)

Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. She had lectured in many places, including the University of Washington. All of this happened after her own near-death experience freed her very predictable and conventional life to follow its own course.

According to Atwater, it takes about seven years for a person who has had a near-death experience to fully recover from it and feel comfortable in the body again (*Beyond the Light*). Therapeutic help may be a good idea for many people. This is astonishing, since the average length of a near-death experience is only about fifteen minutes. It can seem very long to the person going through it, however.

Another conclusion of this new research is that the being of light, and the paradisaal scenes that typify the literature, do not occur even nearly all the time. Hellish scenes occur in more cases than had been suspected. Often, nothing will occur. What determines the content of an NDE? Atwater told me in a letter that, according to her research, the experience is "need-driven." Whatever will help you is what you get. Sharp says that it is a jolt to get us going (p. xii).

This differs from the rationale behind Swedenborg's descriptions of death in *Heaven and Hell* 445-52. To die is to begin permanent residence in the spiritual world, and further lessons, "jolts," are not in order. The time for fundamental change has just run out. The process of dying is therefore, an orderly transition to another level of development that should seem very natural to us, like passing on into adulthood. It doesn't need a lot of drama.

There is evidence in many NDEs that the person who could still return to the body is immediately identifiable. Some people have been sent back very quickly without inquiry or ceremony. Some visible characteristic must have betrayed a still natural state—which is what constituted connection with a body—not typical of those whose bodies have died.

In these books NDEs look less like a unique type of experience, compared to others in parapsychological literature. They can happen without trauma and therefore more or less routinely—which leads to the thought that the label "NDE" may be revised or fall into less use as the research expands. Women giving birth have experienced them. You can jump out of your body at the rapid approach of a car out of control; you don't need to get hit first. A friend of mine reported that for a moment she just spontaneously left her body and could look at it from the outside. Trauma isn't necessary, but trauma cases that produce hospital records were probably the only way the phenomenon could attract public and scientific attention. Since many NDEs include some out-of-body wandering and observing before encountering the other world, they look like a division of the older OOB, the out-of-body experience, which has always had a large but scientifically unrecognized body of literature. This literature may now get more attention.

Kimberly Sharp's book is the most fun to read. She doesn't dwell on theory. She only tells her story, and it is a roller coaster ride all the way through. Beginning with an interruption of the electrical impulse that regulates her heartbeat, she found herself looking into a golden light hundreds of times brighter than the sun, but it didn't hurt her eyes. It flooded the universe out to its edges and then doubled back on itself in many waves. She immediately realized that the Light consisted of love, and it was all for *her*. It was very personal, but sacred. She wondered, nonverbally, Why are we here? *To learn*, the Light said. What is the purpose of life? *To love*. Other things followed, and shortly before she was revived she was told that she would remember this experience only as it was made real in her life. It was recalled only in bits and pieces over the following years.

*Future Memory* explores the incredible possibility of seeing the future. What one sees is what is

determined to happen up to the present moment, and it can be changed. But the experience of seeing it inspires philosophical speculations about a future already laid out somewhere, as if there is an "everywhen," not just an "everywhere." The future can be seen very vividly as space, a drama we haven't yet reached. The difference between time and space is less than we may think, and either one can become visual, depending on what mode of consciousness is brought into play. The reader will probably sum up Atwater's philosophical discussions in his own way, for she isn't always clear; she tries to pour too much into too few words.

Unfortunately, *Future Memory* is also burdened with too many impulsive arguments that don't work. She is very spiritual and an unusually thoughtful writer among those in her field. But in this book she lets herself climb on the theory bandwagon too early, and it carries her off to some gaudy places.

A list of incredible historical coincidences on p. 11, designed to support her thesis, is open to some easy explanations, and she tries too indiscriminately in chapter fifteen to give her experiences a scientific explanation. She picks a lonely theory or two on the ragged fringes of science, and they run off with her.

Seduction by theory is a common problem outside science (and sometimes even inside it). It looks like a breakthrough when a theory seems to cover a problem, and one feels that he can stop work right there and publish. But an indefinitely large number of theories can always be thrown over any set of facts. Theories are a dime a dozen. What singles out the right one is evidence. In science that means agreement from other laboratories and analysis in the journals, lest too much that won't last slip through.

A worse outcome, though, is the trivialization of spirit if it is to be explained by science. In work with the paranormal, a fascination with exotic physical explanations—probably a need for instant scientific

(Continued on page 97)

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# MINISTERIAL STANDARD S

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This past year the Committee on Admissions to Ministry (CAM) was requested to develop a statement on ministerial standards. It would be used as a guide as they met with and made recommendations for ordination into our Swedenborgian Church. After completing the statement, and consulting with SSR faculty, we thought it would be helpful to give all church members the opportunity to read and review it and to offer suggestions to the committee.

So, please, review our statement and send any thoughts, ideas, suggestions, comments to: Marilyn Turley, 4410 Governor Lane S.E., Olympia, WA 98501.

## Introduction

In fulfilling its charge "to oversee the maintenance of high standards for the church's ministry," the Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM) shall base its recommendations for ordination or induction into our ministry on a candidate's competency and continuing growth in the areas described below. The candidate shall have completed the course of study at SSR or its equivalent.

## Pastoral qualities

"The ordained ministry exists to facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, helping them to be open to the Lord's leading and enabling them to live useful lives." *Constitution, XII Preamble.*

With this as our highest standard, we will evaluate candidates on their ability and willingness to:

- lead, teach, work with, and relate to all of God's people;
- positively integrate spiritual and daily life within a faith community through the effective use of a variety of interpersonal skills;
- walk with others throughout their life's journey;
- sustain in every aspect of their ministry an awareness of how they will seek to bring God's presence into the lives of their community and the people they serve, having a vision of what God wants for themselves, our church, and the larger community; and
- show emotional stability by their ability to tolerate stress, their awareness of their limits, and their willingness to seek appropriate help in difficult life situations.

## Spiritual growth

Spiritual growth is brought about by the nurturing of self and others through a growing prayer life, a sense of the sacred, a sense of humor, and a life of charity in a vital relationship to God. All of these reflect a trust and delight in God's surprises. Spiritual growth as a Swedenborgian minister is a lifelong learning process. It is an openness and awareness of life as a journey. This journey entails risk-taking as well as being grounded in our theology and its connection to life.

## Ministerial skills

Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church need:

- the ability to conduct worship services which bring peace, joy, comfort, relevance, challenge, and reverence for life to the congregation in their spiritual journey.
- continued growth in the knowledge and understanding of the Bible and Swedenborg's teachings.
- an ability to clearly express and articulate thoughts and ideas, along with well-developed listening skills.
- a professional attitude and skills to lead and participate in the group process, which leads to the fulfillment of the church's vision and brings strength and peace in the midst of conflict.

## Administrative skills

Ministers of the Swedenborgian Church need:

- to be strong, sensitive leaders who have developed competent administrative skills;
- an understanding that careful organization serves to create an environment of trust, strength, stability, and efficiency in maintaining God's community;
- to be able to work within the denomination, local churches and the larger community;
- to be able to identify and include in church planning responses to social needs of those less fortunate within your local community; and
- to develop the personal skills of independence and the ability to ask for and accept help as needed.

## Moral and ethical standards

A minister is a representative of our national denomination. As leaders of the church community:

- Ministers need to demonstrate a sense of inner strength, which is reflected in being trustworthy, integrated, and authentic.
- Ministers' words would be consistent with their being and their actions.
- Ministers should demonstrate accountability and show respect for secular laws and community standards.
- Ministers should make it a goal to serve as an example of what a God-centered life should be.

# Can We View Ourselves as Spiritual Beings?

*All we have to do . . . is view ourselves as spiritual beings, living in a spiritual place, with a spiritual purpose. The rest will follow.*

Eric Zacharias

Recently I finished reading *At Peace in the Light* by Dannion Brinkley. The book begins with the author's description of a near-death experience in September of 1975. He writes: "The Being of Light that stood in front of me was magnificent. It looked as though it was composed of thousands of tiny diamonds, each glowing with the colors of the rainbow. I didn't know if it was male or female, only that it was great and powerful, yet gentle."

This reminded me somewhat of the Lord's transfiguration as witnessed by the disciples. "And after six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light." Matt. 17:1

In the last chapter of his book, Brinkley writes: "There is a great spiritual movement afoot in the world. This is a movement that has the power to change the direction of mankind."

"All we have to do is realize that the future is not written in stone. All the events that I saw in my visions and all the events that seem to be taking place in the world around us can be altered by group effort. All we have to do, the Being told me, is view ourselves as spiritual be-

ings, living in a spiritual place, with a spiritual purpose. *The rest will follow.*"

In our *Arcana* class we read: "His state then (celestial) is such that he is with the angels of heaven, and is as it were *one among them*; for man has been so created that while living in the world he may *at the same time* be in heaven."

I make no claim to a wise and comprehensive understanding of the forces at work in our world. Deeply disturbing is what appears to be a rising tide of violence, of moral decay, of disregard for authority. On the other hand we witness also a rising level of caring for one another, of compassion, of eagerness to serve the more idealistic values of our common humanity.

The history of the conflict between good and evil goes back a long way. It suffered its most intense hour when Jesus asked this of himself, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour . . . that I might be a witness to the truth."

At the last, in his final message to the world Jesus proclaimed, "It is finished." The conflict was over. Truth had triumphed over falsity. Good over evil. Hope over doom. Life over death. Spirituality over crass materialism.

This question often comes to mind: "Is there one contribution that we, as a church might make to the world around us and within us—that might well serve beyond any other as 'yeast' in the building of a more wholesome world? Somewhere Swedenborg reminds us that the purpose of the church is to nurture the divine within all people.

We are, first of all, spiritual beings. Would it be useful to remind ourselves of this repeatedly—daily? Can we accept this as the primary mission of our church? To nurture this concept in our community, in all of our relationships. "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:21.

Confirmation of this one overarching truth within us—will change us. It will change the way we view ourselves, our neighbors. There will come with this a renewal of energy as attitudes, motivations quicken under the warm glow of God's providence.

"All we have to do . . . is view ourselves as spiritual beings, living in a spiritual place, with a spiritual purpose.

"The rest will follow."

*The Rev. Eric Zacharias is the minister of the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas.*

*Reprinted from The Plains Banner, March 1996.*

## Temenos Update

The impasse with the Department of Environmental Protection regarding the septic system and site development for Temenos has been resolved. The Executive Committee of the General Council and the members of the Philadelphia church are in essential agreement on the adoption of a formal agreement between the two parties. This agreement will turn over title, operation, and control of Temenos to the Philadelphia church. The denomination will hold a mortgage on the property, to cover its capital investment. A promissory note will be drafted with the Philadelphia church agreeing to pay interest beginning five years after the com-

pletion of the eight-bedroom retreat center building.

The Temenos architect and engineer are submitting specifications for site development and the retreat center building to general contractors. Acceptance of bids is expected in June. It is our hope that work can begin in July with completion of the building coming in early 1997. This will enable us to accommodate sixteen more people overnight and provide meeting space for 50 more people. A further report will be made at the convention session in Urbana.

—Rev. Ernest Martin, Director of Temenos

# Tokyo Church Celebrates Progress



*Kinichi Kuniyeda*

Eight months have passed since I left the United States. My mission in Tokyo started from middle of September 1995. Tokyo New Church members were two months preparing the installation ceremony which was held on November 12. More than 150 people came to the ceremony, which was the biggest gathering in our one hundred years' New Church history. In our history, the main three Convention groups could not meet each other for over 40 years, but all three groups met together at the ceremony; moreover, General Church people also visited us. The Lord worked among us for our reconciliation and happy gathering. The ceremony became a historical epoch in our history. After the ceremony we had an evaluation meeting. One member expressed her impression, "I recognized if we want to do something, we can do it and we made it!"

In March we had a wedding ceremony; after the wedding the couple visited SSR on their honeymoon. At least three couples will have wedding ceremonies this year.

On Easter, one person was confirmed. Her name is Miss Kinuka Noda, who is a daughter of the late Rev. Yuzo Noda. I am expecting two members for adult baptism, two to four for infant baptism and two for confirmation this year. Confirmation and baptism classes start in May 1996.

Our budget year is from April 1995 to March 1996; the 1995-1996 budget year became more

than 200 percent bigger than 1994-1995. Average attendance for Sunday worship rose from twelve to fifteen, and we are expecting to have twenty for Sunday worship this budget year.

We are going to have a big event in June. The 100-year-old reed organ which could not play for a long time, and which had been donated by the Pittsburgh Association in 1951, and which worked for worship more than twenty years, is now being repaired and will be finished by the end of May. We are going to have an organ concert sometime in June. This will be a good opportunity for the Tokyo New Church to be recognized in our community.

On Mother's Day we had a general meeting. We have had a discussion group after Sunday worship for the past eight months. This group is very powerful in reforming our church and community. Through this discussion we formed general principles and task forces for new church budget year.

There are a lot of difficulties which we have to climb over, but I believe that the Lord is always with us and He always guides us to what we need to do. I could say that the Lord was and is and will be always among us, even if my mission is very hard. And I feel strongly that I am supported by American Swedenborgians.

*The Rev. Kinichi Kuniyeda was ordained last June during Convention '95 at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.*

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# Cleveland Church Refurbished and Meeting New Challenges



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In February, 1996, the Cleveland church was fortunate enough to have two visiting ministers—the Rev. Dr. George Dole and the Rev. Richard Tafel, Jr. They were both enthusiastic about all the improvements made at the chapel since their last visits.

On the spiritual level, we make sure there is a visiting minister each month to give communion, and to answer any questions which may have been raised in our study group. On the intervening Sundays members conduct services, sometimes with original sermons, sometimes using ones from *Our Daily Bread* or other Swedenborgian sources.

The improvements are largely the result of the strong leadership provided by our president, Chuck Winter. Within the last few months our rusting-out windows have been replaced by glass blocks, which give a light and shimmering appearance while conserving heat and making the building safer. The lights now have dimmers, which enhance the ambience and lower the bills. We have also installed a new furnace. Comfortable new chairs can be linked into pews, with shelves underneath for our *Books of Worship*. We even managed to sell the old pews, which were both ugly and uncomfortable.

When the Rev. John Billings was still with us, we advertised as a wedding chapel. When he was called by the Cincinnati church we were

in a quandary, as we already had several weddings booked. John told us that it was possible for any church member to apply to the state (with the approval and backing of the congregation—and \$10) for a license to perform marriages in Ohio. Five of our members have done this so far. Verda Winter volunteered to be our wedding coordinator. To date we have done 50 weddings, and Verda is launched on a new career!

In the past we lamented that our building was so seldom used. Passersby have told us that they thought the chapel was closed. Now we have an

Hispanic group renting the chapel three times a week, and they are proving to be cooperative tenants. With Verda's many interviews, people see cars in the parking lot and lights on in the chapel, and the community now knows that we exist.

We are a small but very dedicated group, full of plans for improving the property: a new floor for Swedenborg Hall, remodeling of the front porch, new coat racks, tables and display racks. Where there's a will there's a way, and we have the will!

—Jean Bestor, secretary  
Cleveland Swedenborgian Church



The Rev. Dr. George Dole lights altar candles in preparation for service.

## Whose Side Are You On?

(part 1)

The Swedenborg School of Religion has an engraving of a scene from the first formal meeting of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, on September 6, 1774. The Rev. Jacob Duché, later chosen chaplain, is giving the invocation. The men present are in dramatic attitudes, some kneeling on the floor, some gazing upwards. The bewigged Duché, hands clasped, kneels at a prie-dieu. Beginning with the 35th Psalm, "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me." He then launched into extemporaneous prayer, which, according to John Adams, "filled the bosom of every man present." Adams then described the clergyman as "one of the most ingenious men, and best characters, and greatest orators . . . on this continent . . . a zealous friend of liberty and his country."

Some may remember that Duché was a Swedenborgian. But lest we smile smugly, it should be known that at the time Duché delivered this prayer he was an Episcopal minister.

His grandfather, Anthony Duché, a Huguenot, had fled religious persecution in France, first going to England, and in 1699 taking ship for America. Among his fellow passengers was William Penn, on his last visit to the colonies. Penn borrowed thirty pounds from Duché, and when they arrived in Philadelphia, tried to persuade him to accept a plot of land in the center of the city as payment for the loan. Duché turned down the offer, saying that money would suit him better. Penn replied, "Well, well, thou shalt have thy money; but canst thou not see that this will be a great city in a very short time?" Duché's decision may have been short sighted, but he made his fortune, nevertheless. He set up a pottery, and prospered. His son, Jacob Sr., also prospered, and became mayor of Philadelphia (which was growing as Penn had predicted). At his death he left his son a "handsome" bequest.

Duché, Jr. had been well educated, having graduated first in his class (1757) at the College of Philadelphia, now the University of Pennsylvania. He wrote poetry as a child; as a young man he saw his work published in periodicals and he was sometimes asked to recite his work in public. In January, 1757, he dedicated a poem "To Miss Hopkinson, on her excellent performance of the Vocal parts in an Oratorical Exercise . . ." and signed it, "Yours, etc., J. Duché, Junr." What was contained in the "etc." we may surmise from the fact that in 1760 he married Elizabeth Hopkinson.

After graduation, he went to Cambridge, England, to study for the ministry. (The American Episcopal Church was under the control of the Church of

England.) In 1759 a letter from Christ Church, Philadelphia, to the Lord Bishop of London petitioned for Duché's ordination.

The request was granted, and the Rev. Mr. Duché became assistant minister (later rector) of Christ Church. His first sermon was reprinted by Benjamin Franklin and David Hall. Duché also taught oratory at the university, and published articles, poems and a life of William Penn.

As relations with England became increasingly hostile, Duché, while dissatisfied with the British treatment of the colonies, had no wish to revolt. His education in England had undoubtedly made him feel sympathetic to the Crown. Thus it isn't surprising that he was very changeable (a friend says that he was amiable, but "unstable") in his political beliefs. He could preach to the First Battalion of Philadelphia on the topic "The Duty of Standing Fast in Our Spiritual and Temporal Liberties," and later state that his intent had been to disclaim the idea of independence.

On July 4, 1776, Christ Church had voted, with Duché present, that since Congress had declared the Colonies to be independent, henceforth they would omit petitions for the King of Britain. In late September, 1777, Duché, perhaps despairing of the success of the revolution, offered a prayer for the King. This was not only in spite of the parish vote, but contrary to an agreement of the Episcopal clergy of Philadelphia not to use their influence to weaken the power of home rule. As Duché left the church that morning, he was arrested and put into jail. Influential friends got him released the following day.

He didn't seem to learn his lesson. Ten days later he wrote George Washington, pleading with his friend to resume his allegiance to the Crown. Washington replied that had he known its contents he would have returned the letter unopened. He told a friend that he supposed the letter was written from fear rather than from Duché's real feelings. This seems the most charitable interpretation that could have been made. But the letter, which Duché had assumed would be kept confidential, Washington placed before Congress! He later said that he had intended it only for the eyes of Congress. But surely he must have realized that its contents would soon be spread abroad and published in the papers, and that this would be the end of Duché's career and reputation. As its contents became widely known, Duché was declared a traitor.

*(To be concluded)*

*Louise Woofenden is a writer and former archivist at the Swedenborg School of Religion.*

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# PCA Retreat

The Annual Pacific Coast Association retreat was held this year from March 15-17, once again at the Center for Spiritual Development in Orange, California. I had heard glowing reports about the event for several years, but this was the first time in the nearly three years I've been in California that I had felt I could take the time to attend.

Thirteen women and one man were welcomed to the three-day encounter with Perry Martin, a psychotherapist and program director at Temenos, the Swedenborgian retreat center in West Chester, Pennsylvania. She has come out to Southern California for eleven years to lead the retreat, which is part of PCA's outreach program that has been going on since the late seventies. I had spoken with Perry the week before, and when she mentioned that we were probably going to be doing some Proprioceptive Writing, that cinched my decision to make the effort to attend.

I live in the Backcountry, the mountains back of San Diego, and it is quite a long drive to Orange County. I was running late and was told when I arrived just after dark at the Center for Spiritual Development that the group had gone to dinner. There was about the place such an air of serenity that the low-level anxiety I often feel in new situations was completely dissipated. Flowers were blooming and nodding everywhere I looked; the Center is a walled garden oasis in the midst of a busy city teeming with traffic. Against advice, I hiked the half-mile to the restaurant rather than getting back in the car, and was hailed on my arrival like a long-lost sister, and introduced all around. By the time we got back to the Center, I'd had several satisfying conversations with these wonderful new friends that were so nourishing and fun I realized that if I had needed to leave the next day, it would have been worth the trip just for those encounters.

I was rooming with Manon Washburn, president of the Los Angeles Society. As she reported last year, many of these people have been coming for several years to the retreat, and wouldn't consider missing it, no matter how they have to rearrange their schedules. I learned to my surprise that only three of us were Swedenborgian—Manon, Perry and myself. Many were friends of friends who had attended before and spread the word—outreach in its truest sense. Many are in the helping professions. A therapist who was a holocaust survivor, another therapist with MS who had traveled all the way from a small fishing village at the extreme northern tip of California. All eager to work on their own spiritual growth.

Emphasis in this weekend session was on the practice of Proprioceptive Writing, which "*de-emphasizes the act of writing and centers learning around accessing internal visual, auditory, and kinesthetic images . . . This shift in focus arouses in the writer a dynamic awareness of the richness of inner mental life . . . awakening memory . . . recording the here and now of thought flow.*"<sup>1</sup> It is practiced to music in half-hour periods under relaxed and stress-free conditions, in groups or alone. The idea is to begin anywhere, with anything, and keep the flow going. Perry suggested that we deepen and keep the stream-of-consciousness moving by asking ourselves questions when we come to a key descriptive word such as ugly, love, poor: "What do I mean by poor, what do I mean by ugly?"—so that we push boldly into specifics and move into deeper thought and emotional territory than we may have explored before.

*"Proprioceptive Writing has penetrated the years of unformed thought, unvoiced feeling and forgotten dreams, and has brought to light shreds of stories and fragments*

*of poems which otherwise might have been lost . . . parts of me I had forgotten I'd ever known . . . other parts I had never expected to meet. As thoughts become clearer, inner awareness strengthens and perceptions sharpen."*<sup>2</sup>

Perry had us do a warmup exercise that preceded the sessions, in which we divided our lives into seven-year segments, recorded life-shaping events for those years, (such as *father left, dog dies, marriage*, etc.) and asked our own "life question" that emerged for each period, taking us up to our present age.

The process elicited, as it always does in our shared human experiences, tears, laughter, healing, and the profound feelings of respect and compassion that come from hearing one another's stories.

Manon Washburn writes, "This year's retreat with Perry gave me a renewed sense of myself. She is a sensitive and caring psychotherapist who draws us into our own feelings. We start with simple sharing and find ourselves describing, with tears, a life-changing moment. If we get a little unglued, she is with us fully, gently guiding, supporting and healing. We all gained the positive awareness of the possibility of our own change and growth . . ."

I'm sure they'll be adding me to the "regulars" who attend this annual event, but I also highly recommend exploring Proprioceptive Writing as a tool for growth. The right kind of music greatly enhances the process, and the experience of reading aloud your offering in a safe group of people who are truly listening with their hearts has a profoundly opening and moving effect that can't really be described. You have to be there.

Patte LeVan

1. Linda T. Metcalf, M.A., co-founder of the Proprioceptive Writing Center, Rockport, Maine.
2. Mary Bok, teacher of Proprioceptive Writing. (Mary regularly conducts workshops at Temenos).



### *The Artist's Way* Lauded

Dear Readers,

In the December *Messenger*, I read of Patte LeVan's discovery and recommendation of the book, *The Artist's Way*, and could hardly wait to buy it. Carole Rienstra, the minister's wife, was also excited and ordered a copy. She so wanted us to get started with the twelve-week program. Bless her, she didn't make it to our first meeting, but she knew we had begun. We formed a group of four, meeting weekly at the church. None of the four of us is a member of the Swedenborgian Church, but that doesn't seem to hinder us.

In the April *Messenger*, Renee Billings Morris writes of "Spirituality And Church Growth," and of our becoming familiar and comfortable with our own transformational healing—our relationship with God—and being willing to share it. This is occurring in our group of four. Changes are taking place even as we are only halfway through the program. *The Artist's Way* is a wonderful tool for digging up our buried treasure. Uncovering dreams, old and new. (Later I want to write about an idea—an artist's dream—I was given . . .).

Let me simply report that as a writer I was trying to recover my creative self, but I have been shown that besides a writer's block, I have had a self-affirmation block—a spiritual block, which cuts off all other creative tributaries.

My understanding of church growth is not in quantity but in quality—one by one. Not exterior change so much as interior. I, like Patte LeVan, recommend use/study of *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron.

Barbara Moorman  
St. Louis, Missouri

### *Four Angels Round My Head*

Dear Editor,

As an isolated member, I receive *The Messenger* and read it from cover to cover. When Bob Kirven was editor and I was A.N.C.L. president (between 1968-70) we co-edited one issue—back in the old days.

One article in your May 1996 *Messenger* touched me deeply, and I wish you would publish my response. I just read "Four Angels Round My Head" by Susan Flagg Poole. Susan—I thought that was the most fitting essay I have ever read. I loved your mom—she was a guiding post in my life. Your dad was a class act. And I feel blessed to have known all your family.

Love,  
Ernie Ekberg  
Weatherford, Texas

(Editor's note: Mr. Ekberg is referring to Susan Flagg Poole's tribute to her mother, the late Lucile Flagg).

## OUR DAILY BREAD

*Our Daily Bread* is in a state of transition. Dick Tafel, its editor for the past ten years or so, feels it's time to let go, time for someone else to take over. ODB, therefore, is in search of a new editor, someone, hopefully, who feels a sense of calling and vision to serve in this way. In keeping with this idea, it will be important for those who are interested in this work, to submit a proposal to the secretary of the Council of Ministers, the Rev. Sue Turley-Moore, no later than September of 1996, one that would express their new program or vision of what ODB could be.

## Book Review

(Continued from page 90)

respectability—has often led to the perhaps unintended devaluation of spirit. It gets put on a lower level, while the truth of the phenomenon is made physical. For example, Atwater suggests that consciousness is made up of tachyons. Tachyons are exotic physical entities that travel faster than light. they are purely theoretical, but Atwater isn't afraid to jump the gun on research. Of course, the material universe reflects spirit, but explanations should go the other way—the spiritual explains the material, not the reverse. Only that kind of explanation will allow paranormal investigations to be spiritually significant. The heart is not deeply moved by anything else. Would anyone really care to have physics explain Sharp's vision?

What we are seeing is the fascinating beginnings of a new field of study. It doesn't look as though it is going to calm down anytime soon. All three of these books are worth reading; the problems and the bumpy rides they give us at least show us that the world is filled with reassurance that we aren't being forgotten. Our time is very dynamic, and even though it is deeply troubled we are apparently gaining in consciousness, not losing it. Swedenborg's time was dismal with its unconsciousness, the sheer lack of awareness of crisis. That brought on the death of the Church. Our time is disturbing, but because we know what is wrong and are concerned about it. Our very disturbance is a saving consciousness, and for that reason, we are being visited by angels, and are even visiting them.

Steve Koke is a copy editor for Blue Dolphin Publishing, in Grass Valley, California. He is a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.

### Actual Announcements Taken from Church Bulletins: (Not ours, of course!)



- Don't let worry kill you—let the church help.
- Thursday night potluck supper. Prayer and medication to follow.
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.



## Swedenborgian Terms Simplified

Paul Zacharias

# Remains

To the best of my knowledge the concept of remains is a strictly Swedenborgian notion, though many present-day psychologists, giving it a different label, readily accept this idea. Swedenborg wrote: "No one could live unless he had something of innocence, charity, and mercy living in him. This man receives from the Lord when an infant and child. The things thus stored up are called 'remains.' AC 1050

When you read the selections under "remains" and "memory" in Potts Concordance you realize that *everything* that an infant or young child experiences is implanted in that person's mind and soul. Every action, every word, every external happening that a growing child is exposed to becomes part of his/her inner life. And more importantly, not only are these millions of minute, daily experiences imbedded in the child's memory, but the feelings and impressions associated with these events are also recorded. In brief, nothing that a young, developing child is exposed to is ever lost; every memory is tucked away, at some level, in the deep recesses of the individual's psyche. How essential it is then to surround a young child with positive, loving influences!

Obviously we are not consciously aware of most of our childhood "remains"; this would make adult life very cumbersome. God's fortuitous gift of "selective memory" is with us throughout our entire life process.

The role of remains is subtle, but extremely important. Without this early foundation the later process of adult regeneration—developing the spiritual life—would be well-nigh impossible. Every person in the world is gifted with remains, thus everyone is a potential angel. And as we progress through life, new re-

mains, new spiritual qualities are constantly being added, assuming that one is basically heading in the right direction.

This is one of the main ways in which the Lord can reach us, touch us—sometimes directly, more often indirectly. Hasn't this happened to all of us many times: we seem to be "guided" in a certain direction; we are caught up in a difficult moral dilemma and suddenly, from deep within, a voice, a song, a thought, a strong feeling surfaces and shows us the way! In these many instances, remains are being stirred up, evokes, brought into play, as they interact with the more shallow levels of our awareness. The needful thing is to be sensitive to these inner promptings.

Unfortunately, Swedenborgians don't very often talk about the grace of God, but I suspect that God's grace and remains are intimately connected—both make the gift of truly humal life possible.

"Man does not learn these states, but receives them as a gift from the Lord. Together with the truths of faith, they are what are called 'remains.' When a person is being regenerated, these states are the beginning of it, and he is led into them; for the Lord operates through the remains." AC 1050

*The Rev. Paul Zacharias is a retired Swedenborgian minister living in Kitchener, Ontario. He is the author of the ever-popular doctrinal pamphlet, "This We Believe."*

## The Swedenborgian Church

(Statistics as of December 31, 1995)

Associations	Churches		Ordained Ministers			Authorized Lay Leaders	Members			No. of Delegates
	Active	Inactive	Active	Inactive	Retired		Active	Inactive	Total	
Canada	1	0	2	-	1	1	142	65	207	16
Connecticut	-	1	-	-	-	-	7	9	16	2
Illinois	6	-	3	1	-	-	123	38	161	14
Kansas	2	-	0	0	2	-	111	0	111	13
Maine	2	-	1	1	-	-	120	168	288	14
Massachusetts	7	-	9	4	1	0	184	57	241	20
Michigan	1	-	1	-	-	-	65	27	92	8
Middle Atlantic	3	-	3	-	-	-	120	44	164	14
New York	1	0	1	-	0	-	22	33	55	4
Ohio	3	2	1	0	1	2	75	5	80	9
Pacific Coast	6	-	9	3	2	1	313	7	320	33
Southeast	1	1	3	0	0	0	26	16	42	4
Western Canada	7	1	2	1	5	0	171	7	178	19
Societies										
Georgetown, Guyana	1	-	-	-	1	-	25	15	40	4
Church of the Little Grain (did not report)										
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1504</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>174</b>

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## Passages

### Thank you . . .

The response of love and caring from all of you when Carole died was nearly overwhelming and received with heartfelt thanks.

Carole was not only my wife, but she was also my best friend. Carole had a profound effect on the direction of my life. What became more apparent to me when she died was the profound effect that she had on many people. I guess I already knew that, but how much only became apparent with the calls, cards and letters which I received from all over the United States and Canada.

Carole loved life, loved people, loved being of use, loved gardens. She was perhaps the most devoted person to the New Church I have ever known.

A memorial service will be held in St. Louis June 16, 1996. We have started a memorial fund in her name, which we hope to use to build a gazebo overlooking the garden of the Church of the Open Word. We welcome donations in her memory.

Again my heartfelt thanks for all of your expressions of love, care and concern. I am doing fine.

*Sincerely,  
Rev. David Rienstra  
St. Louis, Missouri*

[The Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr. conducted a memorial service for Carole April 14, 1996, for the Fryeburg, Maine, congregation. David and Carole were at the Fryeburg New Church for ten years, when he was pastor there from 1977-1987.]

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*—How wonderful it is that  
nobody need wait a single  
moment before starting to  
improve the world.*

Anne Frank

### Baptisms

Cheon, Han, Lee—Min Heui Cheon; Jung Hee Han; Young Ho Lee; Charles Lee, son of Young Ho Lee; Hanna Lee, daughter of Young Ho Lee; and Jun-chol Lee were baptized into the Christian faith April 7, 1996, at the Korean New Jerusalem Church of New York in Bayside, Long Island, the Rev. George F. Dole officiating.

### Confirmations

Alexander, Askew, Cox, Doy, Land, Mesick, Stewart—Sabrina Alexander, Judy Askew, Robert Cox, Deborah Doy, Geoffrey Doy, Jim Land, Susan Mesick, and Charleen Stewart were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 31, 1996, at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Drs. James Lawrence and Rachel Rivers officiating.

Evans, McBride, Wiens—Amy Caitlin and Erin Christine Evans; Bryce Donald McBride; Dale Allen, Lynnea May, Robyn Elizabeth, and Sabrina Jeanne Wiens were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church March 31, 1996, at the B.C. New Church Society in Kelowna, British Columbia, the Rev. Erwin Reddekopp officiating.

Garber, Taylor—William Garber and his daughter, Barbara Taylor were welcomed back into active membership in the San Diego Swedenborgian Church March 31, 1996, after an absence of several years.

### Deaths

Bennett—the Rev. John Bennett, age 71, entered the spiritual world April 29, 1996, in Vernon, B.C., following unsuccessful surgery for a malignant brain tumor February 29, 1996. A memorial service was conducted in Vernon May 15, 1996, the Rev. Erwin Reddekopp officiating. John is survived by his wife Muriel and their three children: Jennifer of Vernon, Gordon of Edmonton, and Robert of Vancouver.

Berran—Bertha Berran, longtime church member, entered the spiritual world April 28, 1996, at the Bayside Rehabilitation and Care Center in San Diego. Through the years she was a member in Florida, Riverside, California, Wayfarers Chapel and San Diego. She was a kindergarten teacher in the New York area for 35 years, heading west upon retirement. At her request, no formal service was held, but the San Diego congregation honored her at their worship service May 5, with favorite hymns and sharing of memories.

Garber—Jean Garber, a longtime but recently inactive member of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world February 25, 1996. A resurrection service was conducted March 3, 1996, the Rev. Eldon Smith officiating.

Richard—Ednah Edmiston Richard, 85, lifetime member of the Swedenborgian Church (Riverside, San Diego and Seattle) entered the spiritual world February 27, 1996. A memorial service was conducted March 3, 1996, the Rev. Paul Martin officiating. Ednah's father and grandfather, Lloyd Hasting Edmiston and Littleberry Edmiston, were both Swedenborgian ministers. Ednah was devoted to her church and her family. She is survived by her six children: Lorna, Janet, Lloyd, Ronald, John and David.

McKeon—Joseph McKeon, 76, educator and father of SSR President Mary Kay Klein, died March 24, 1996, in Albany, New York, following a long illness.



Fred Calabretta and Liz Balcom at Oral History Workshop

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden.

Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

As a result of Swedenborg's own spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church today exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

Swedenborg shared in his theological writings a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of Scripture as a story of inner-life stages as we learn and grow.

Swedenborg would conclude, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

## SSR Update

# Oral History Workshop



Min-Heui Cheon, Lee Woofenden, Andy Stinson, Ted Klein, Jean Hilliard, Bill Woofenden, George Dole at Oral History Workshop

The Swedenborg School of Religion sponsored a workshop on oral history for church members and friends, students, faculty, and staff on March 23, 1996. The workshop, held as part of our Wednesday Forum series, was planned by Jean Hillard, librarian, and Liz Balcom, archivist. They are working with SSR faculty and students to develop an oral history project to record interesting and important aspects of our history that would otherwise be lost.

The workshop was led by Fred Calabretta. Mr. Calabretta, whose experience includes nine years as Oral Historian at Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut, is a past president of the New England Association of Oral History. He currently serves as chair of the Society of American Archivists' Oral History Section. He has conducted many workshops on oral history, including workshops under the auspices of the New England Archivists.

The workshop was universally enjoyed and very effective, as evidenced by the fact that everyone was inspired by it to come up with ideas for implementation of our project or for additional possible projects.

More information about this project will be available at the convention in Urbana, Ohio. Meanwhile, church members are encouraged to begin thinking about who in their church community has an interesting story to tell about life in the church over the years. Oral histories can provide invaluable information about the life of our communities, and the people who compose them, from a unique perspective.

There are many ways to participate in this project. We will need interviewers, interviewees, tape transcribers, and coordinators. Anyone who is interested in participating or who has suggestions about people to interview or topics or events to be covered are encouraged to contact Jean or Liz at the SSR Library.

\* \* \*

The Swedenborg School of Religion Board of Trustees has approved an area of concentration in spirituality within the M.A. degree in Swedenborgian Studies. To fulfill the requirements of the area of concentration, students must complete three required courses in the area of spirituality, as well as a thesis project involving a topic in spirituality. The courses and thesis would total 15 credit hours of the 48 required for the M.A.

The required courses are: Swedenborg and the History of Western Mysticism, Eastern Religions and Swedenborgian Spirituality, and Practicum in Transformational Spirituality.

(Additional workshop photo, page 99)

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